



NOAA Teacher at Sea
James Miller
Onboard NOAA Ship RAINIER
August 13 - 27, 2005

Log 8

Day 10: Monday, August 22, 2005

Location: Anchored Northeast side of Mitrofanina Island

Weather: Fog and rain, low 60's

Wind: 10-15kts

Seas: 1' swells

Itinerary: Breaking down tide gauge and GPS stations, then underway for Chiginigak Bay

Science and Technology Log

Due to the deteriorating weather forecast for the entire area around Mitrofanina Island we are packing up and moving out. There were two things that needed to be done today. First, a tide gauge that the crew installed on Mitrofanina earlier in the season had to be removed. The gauge sent tide information via satellite to a facility on the mainland. Second, the differential global positioning system (DGPS) that was also installed on the Island earlier in the season had to be removed. The DGPS was installed to enhance GPS signals when launches are surveying in the area.

I was assigned to help break down the DGPS with two officers and a survey technician. We headed out early in one of the skiffs for the island. The DGPS consists of a tall antenna mounted on aluminum framing which is supported by lines tied off to stakes in the ground. It also has a watertight box that acts as the main processor for transmitting and receiving. The processor is powered by six 12v car batteries, which get charged by a series of solar panels. Soon after being dropped off we realized we all forgot to bring bug dope, and soon after that the bugs were swarming. It's amazing the motivational power of flying, pestering insects. We had the station apart and lugged down to the beach in under an hour. Unfortunately the amount of gear and people exceed the capacity of the skiff, so it required more than one trip. I drew the short straw along with one of the officers to wait on the island for the skiff to return. It took about an hour so we did a little treasure hunting along the beach at the high tide line. Earlier in the season, some of the crew found antique fishing trap floats made of blown glass. I'm unsure of how old they are, but let's just say very. We didn't find anything as interesting.

Personal Log

I'm sorry to be leaving Mitrofanina Island, partly because it is so beautiful, and also because it marks the end of the work for this leg of the trip.

We got underway for Chiginigak Bay around 4:00pm to basically run from the oncoming storm. The travel time was about 8 hours. The seas had already started to build when we left. For the first half of the trip we were traveling with the seas, which made for a smoother ride, however, we had to turn broadside (parallel) to the seas for the second half. When running broadside to the sea the ship pitches from side to side at pretty steep angles. I was typing up some logs in the computer room when all the books and games on the shelf came tumbling down, what a mess. Anyway, it certainly wasn't as bad as we anticipated and we arrived in the bay some time around midnight.

Before bed I went up to the bridge to see how the ship was handling in the seas. One of the newer officers to the ship gave me some more navigation lessons, which was cool.

Sleeping hasn't been a problem, even with the constant noise of the engines and rolling of the ship. In fact, I sleep deeply and have to drag myself out of bed in the morning. My cabin doesn't have a porthole so NO light gets in. It could be the middle of the day and I wouldn't know it.

Despite all the fun I'm having, I have to say I really miss my home and family. I give the crew a lot of credit for doing this all year long. One of the crewmembers said that longing for home is a great feeling, it keeps you going, and that's why you can't make the ship your home. Seems like good advice for newcomers on the ship.